

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01320 241533Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00  
INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 IO-13  
/066 W

-----241553Z 079018 /43

O 241405Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0000  
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
INFO USCINCEUR  
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T BEIRUT 1320

JOINT DEFENSE/STATE MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, MARR, LE, US  
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GENERAL HANNA SAID  
AND PRESIDENT SARKIS

REF: BEIRUT 1276 (DTG 221712Z MAR 77) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: INDICATIONS THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS MAY  
REPLACE GEN HANNA SAID AS ARMY CG TODAY CAUSE CONCERN  
IN CHRISTIAN AREA. PHALANGE AND PNL EXTREMISTS MAY  
USE DISMISSAL AS TEST OF STRENGTH WITH SARKIS AND  
ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT DOWNFALL OF GOVERNMENT.  
GEN SAID ALLEGED TO BE CONSIDERING DEPLOYING WITH  
CHRISTIAN MILITIA TO THE SOUTH IF DISMISSED. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01320 241533Z

2. AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE MARCH 24, DATT WAS  
INFORMED BY RELIABLE SOURCE THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS  
HAD MADE A DECISION TO REPLACE GEN HANNA SAID WITH  
BRIG GENERAL SIMONE SOUHEID SAME DAY. GRIG GENERAL  
SOUHEID IS A PRO-WESTERN 53-YEAR-OLD MARONITE AND  
FORMER CHEHABIST OFFICER WHO IS HIGHLY RESPECTED  
BY BOTH MOSLEM AND MODERATE CHRISTIAN OFFICERS.

3. ARMY HEADQUARTERS WAS TENSE MORNING MARCH 24; ABOUT 50 ARMED SOLDIERS WERE AT THE MAIN GATE AND NUMEROUS OFFICERS WERE ARRIVING FROM OTHER CAMPS. GEN SAID HAD CALLED AN ASSEMBLY OF THE APPROXIMATE 500 CHRISTIAN OFFICERS TO ASK FOR THEIR SUPPORT. LATER IT WAS LEARNED THAT, CONTRARY TO EXPECTATION, HE URGED MODERATION DURING THE MEETING AND ASKED THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN WITHOUT APPROVAL AND THAT EVERY OFFICER OBEY PRESIDENT. PRIOR TO ASSEMBLY, HE HAD INDICATED TO RELIABLE SOURCE THAT IF SIDMISSSED HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO RALLY CHRISTIAN FOLLOWERS BY TAKING COMMAND OF CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND GOING TO THE SOUTH, WHERE HE WOULD CONTINUE FIGHTING WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF CREATING A SEPARATE MARONITE ENCLAVE. LOCAL AP REPORTER INFORMED DATT THAT AN IDF GENERAL OFFICER VISITED QULAYAH ON 23 MARCH. THIS WAS CORROBORATED BY A LEBANESE CHRISTIAN MILITARY SOURCE AND COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE SOME BEARING ON HANNA SAID'S CONSIDERATION OF SOUTHERN MOVEMENT.

4. DISMISSAL OF HANNA SAID IS UNAVOIDABLE STEP IN REBUILDING OF LEBANESE ARMY. THERE WAS DISAGREEMENT, HOWEVER, BETWEEN LEBANESE FRONT AND PRESIDENT SARKIS ON WHETHER THIS WOULD BE DONE PRIOR TO A POLITICAL SOLUTION. LEBANESE CHRISTIANS TRUST HANNA SAID AND HAVE WANTED TO KEEP HIM IN POWER AS LONG AS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF HIS HARD-LINE  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01320 241533Z

ATTITUDE, HIS GUARDIANSHIP OF SURRENDERED CHRISTIAN HEAVY WEAPONS, AND HIS COORDINATION OF CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH. DATT HAS BEEN TOLD THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST THREE HIGH-LEVEL ANTI-PAKRADOUNI PHALANGIST AND PNL EXTREMIST MEETINGS THIS PAST WEEK, WHICH PLANNED TO CAPITALIZE ON A SARKIS/SAID CONFRONTATION, WITH VARIOUS SUBVERSIVE ACTIONS INTENDED TO FORCE SARKIS FROM OFFICE. REPORTEDLY, CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT CHRISTIAN INDIGNATION AT DISMISSAL OF SAID AND FAILURE OF THE PRESIDENT TO PUNISH THE CHOUF KILLERS TO CREATE DEMONSTRATION IN CHRISTIAN AREAS, INCIDENTS AGAINST SYRIANS, DESTRUCTION OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, BOMBINGS OF OFFICIALHOMES AND THE ASSASSINATION OF MINDEF FOUAD BOUTROS. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH FAITH TO PUT IN THESE REPORTS.

5. COMMENT: SHOWDOWN WITH CHAMOUNISTS MENTIONED IN REFTTEL MAY BE AT HAND. IT HARD TO PREDICT HOW IT

WILL GO. SARKIS PRESUMABLY CAN COUNT ON SYRIANS  
TO SUPPORT HIM, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ONCE HE HAS  
TAKEN A DECISION AND SHOWS HE MEANS IT, TROOPS WILL  
FALL INTO LINE. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT  
MILITANT CHRISTIANS WILL MAKE GOOD THEIR THREATS.  
WE HOPE REASON WILL PREVAIL, BUT HAVE NO ASSURANCE  
IT WILL.  
PARKER

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MILITARY PERSONNEL, PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS, REORGANIZATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 24-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977BEIRUT01320  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770101-0307  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** BEIRUT JOINT  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770328/aaaaaxxv.tel  
**Line Count:** 124  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** c94e20b3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 BEIRUT 1276  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3013837  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GENERAL HANNA SAID AND PRESIDENT SARKIS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINS, MARR, LE, US, (SARKIS, ELIAS), (HANNA)  
**To:** STATE DOD  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/c94e20b3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009